

# Aldous Huxley's Account of Japan in *Jesting Pilate*

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## 1. Introduction

Aldous Huxley, celebrated novelist, essayist and travel writer, visited Japan in the April of 1926. It was only “a flying visit” on an extended tour of Asia and the US, and hence was to occupy only a small chapter of the book-length travel journal, *Jesting Pilate*, that he published later the same year. Nonetheless, despite its brevity, Huxley's account deserves attention not only for its intrinsic worth as travel writing, as a display of wit, erudition and descriptive power, but also, given the author's central position amongst the British literati of his time, for the light it sheds on changing perceptions of Japan during the inter-war years.

That there should be changing perceptions of culture *per se* is no surprise given the political, social and artistic ferment that followed the end of the first world war (Bullock; McFarlane). Huxley, the scion of two illustrious families of Victorian intellectuals<sup>1</sup>, was right at the centre of this new wave of thinking. His formative years were spent in the privileged milieu of Eton and Balliol College, Oxford. A precocious talent, he formed strong links during the war with various members of the Bloomsbury intellectual circle<sup>2</sup>. Inevitably, the elitism and anti-bourgeois ethos which permeated the group (not to mention its cynicism, hedonism and anti-war sentiment) left its imprint on the young Huxley. During the late tens and early twenties, Huxley became close friends with T. S. Eliot and D. H. Lawrence (leading figures in British modernism) and the influence of both these writers, especially their critique of the artificiality and spiritual poverty of contemporary society, is evident in his early works (Poller; Tigges).<sup>3</sup> These included three satirical novels - *Crome Yellow* (1921), *Antic Hay* (1923), and *Those Barren Leaves* (1925) - written in the early twenties, which established his reputation as writer. These works present a fascinating chronicle and panoramic overview of the hedonistic lifestyles and varied opinions on art and philosophy held by the cultured elite in the aftermath of world war one<sup>4</sup>. However, although Huxley's aim may be seen as, firstly, to capture the unique sensibility and *Zeitgeist* of his era - to speak for the so-called “war generation”- he was also clearly driven by his own personal sense of displacement and antipathy to aspects of the modern. For while the dramatic action of these satires may focus on the frenetic, bored and trivial pursuits of the cultured elite, their shenanigans take place against the backdrop of a rootless, fragmented society beset by a vulgar materialism that constrains the life of the mass of people. This general critique of modernity, and the belief that modern society, driven by the mass media and mass consumption, was having a pernicious effect on the individual, as well as undermining traditional cultural values, are persistent themes in Huxley's early writings. In *On The Margin*, a 1923 collection of essays, he says that modern pleasures,

such as the cinema, newspapers, and popular music, are becoming “more and more imbecile”, and constitute a greater threat to “civilisation” than world war one ever did (OTM 46-52). Clearly, like many of the intelligentsia, Huxley did not subscribe to any Victorian notion of progress. His generation had, he said in a letter to his father, suffered the “violent disruption”<sup>5</sup> of the values and certainties of earlier epochs, and their ensuing ennui and disillusionment was, he elsewhere argued, not merely the result of the catastrophe of war, but rather of a long historical process -a “vast structure of failures and disillusionments”- which, he says, included the ‘failure’ of the French Revolution, followed by the “filth” and “misery” of industrialisation, the restless boredom of urbanisation, and finally the coup de grâce of war - all of which had sapped the spiritual strength and vitality of modern man. (OTM 23-25)

The point of the above preamble is not merely to point out that Huxley had close ties and affinities with the British literati, but also to stress that his general ideas on art, society and spirituality, and particularly his antipathy to modernity, invariably impinged on whatever he wrote. And so it was with *Jesting Pilate*, the 1926 travel work that we now consider here.

Huxley’s plan for a (somewhat truncated) round-the-world voyage<sup>6</sup> may also be seen as yet another expression of his desire to describe, and reflect on, the “life and opinions” of his age. Not only is *Jesting Pilate* eclectic in scope, allowing the author to juxtapose and contrast the ancient and modern, the cultures of east and west, and thereby indulge in the aesthetic internationalism that was so intrinsic a part of modernism (Bradbury 101); but it is also, at the same time, a very personal account, and the narrative is concerned not so much to impart “truth”, or give information about the societies observed, but rather to bring to life the experience of being the traveler, the sense of an individual consciousness traveling, detached, through the landscape. In this respect the book was, as a contemporary reviewer noted, an example of “a new kind of travel book”, which records the spiritual rather than physical voyages of their author. (Quoted in Watt 143)

The position of Japan within this account is worth noting. The first part of the book is devoted to India - for Huxley a disturbing mixture of squalor and spirituality. He was doubtful as to the ethical justification for British rule of India, and led to question, at a more general level, the ethics and value of his own position as member of a cultured elite supported by colonialism. India was followed by Burma and Malaya, with relatively brief sojourns in the Phillippines and Shanghai before Japan. Shanghai was, for Huxley, the quintessence of an exotic, pre-industrial society that was vitally alive - “Bergson’s elan vital in the raw” (*Jesting Pilate* 241)- and the vitality of this social organism would, he told the reader, still be there thousands of years in the future when Europe’s had collapsed of “fatigue.” And after Japan came America: the land of modernity, of Ford, of prohibition, of jazz, and of mass entertainment. Thus, Japan’s position on this cultural and spiritual journey was, particularly given its recent rapid industrialisation, located in a transitional zone between the “timeless East” of Shanghai and the frenetic modernity of the USA. We should therefore not expect Huxley’s account (particularly given his revisionist premise and satirical bent) to be a simplistic one. And indeed, the portrait of Japan that he gives us, whilst being extremely limited and

offering only a glimpse of the culture, is, as we shall see, ultimately one which is ambivalent and riven with doubt for the future.

## 2. Huxley's journey through Japan

The first part of Huxley's description is unrelentingly bleak. The first image he presents us is of a dreary landscape blighted by industry. When he and his wife land at Kobe, the air smells of soot, and under the grey sky the people paddle around the muddy, rains-soaked streets in "stilt-like clogs", dressed in "capotes" and "dressing gowns". It is, he says, a "funereal wintry day", and the scene reminds him more of a winter's day in Scotland than the "month of Cherry Blossom" in the exotic East. This grotesque combination of images of east and west is a prelude for what is to come. (JP 243)

They then travel by train to Kyoto. Huxley describes a countryside disfigured by the spread of industry. There are "groves" of chimneys in the countryside they pass; the shanty towns around the factories are "like toadstools" around "the roots of trees"; Osaka is a large "fungus bed."

We got into the train and for two hours rolled through a grey country, bounded by dim hills and bristling with factory chimneys. Every few miles the sparse chimneys would thicken to a grove, with, round their feet - like toadstools about the roots of trees - a sprawling collection of wooden shanties; a Japanese town. The largest of these fungus beds was Osaka. (JP 243)

Huxley clearly deplores the spread of an ugly industrialism which he sees as defiling nature and the countryside - a traditional enough Romantic theme perhaps - but we should also note the use of the scientific, and specifically biological, metaphor, which gives it a particular twist. The factories and towns are portrayed as a kind of fungus - a parasitical growth - which is spreading through the natural world. In this way Huxley strips the landscape of any human agency; industrial growth becomes a vast organic process which is both unstoppable and invasive.

The second image Huxley presents is of the city as a dreary, urban wasteland, engendering ennui. In Kyoto, which he sardonically refers to as "the Art City of Japan", the rain continues to fall and he is impressed particularly by the monotony and shabbiness of the city landscape. Far from having the solidity and elegance of an ancient capital, Kyoto reminds Huxley of "a mining camp that one sees on the movies", though, he adds, it is many times larger than "any possible Wild Western original. "

Little wooden shacks succeed little wooden shack interminably, mile after mile; and the recession of the straight untidy roads is emphasised by the long lines of posts, the sagging electric wires that flank each street, like the trees of an avenue. All the cowboys in the world could live in Kyoto, all the Forty-Niners. Street leads into identical street, district merges indistinguishably into district. In this dreary ocean of log-cabins almost the only White Houses are the hotels. (JP 244)

This “dreary ocean of log-cabins” is not the squalor of brute poverty that Huxley had earlier encountered in India; it is a modern industrial squalor, and is more evocative of a spiritual malaise - of the monotony and squalid functionality of modern life - than of physical suffering. Huxley surveys a dreary, endless ocean of small-scale industrial squalor, where “sagging electric wires” have replaced trees.

Huxley’s antipathy for the ugly disordered urban landscape of Kyoto increases when he sets out to explore the city later that night, and encounters yet another aspect of modernity that he abhors: namely, an obsession with mass consumption, and in particular with the consumption of the trivial and vulgar, as represented by “penny-bazaars” and Woolworth stores. In Kyoto, Huxley tells us, “almost every one of the hundred thousand shacks” is a shop, and he has the intense impression of being in a giant Woolworth emporium.<sup>7</sup>

It was like walking, ankle deep in mud, through an enormous Woolworth’s bazaar. Such a collection of the cheap and shoddy, of the quasi-genuine and the imitation-solid, of the vulgar and the tawdry, I have never seen. (JP 244)

Carey (1992) notes that both the aforementioned themes - an antipathy to urban sprawl and to “vulgar” mass society - may be seen as prominent aspects of the modernist critique of culture. And it is perhaps therefore through unconscious association, that Huxley then goes on to introduce another characteristic theme of modernist fiction; namely, the unreality of modern life, and the difficulty of establishing what is a real, living tradition from a counterfeit copy. For at this point in his account Huxley is suddenly overpowered by a sense of the “flimsiness” and “unreality” of all the arts-and-crafts goods he is viewing, leading him to question the authenticity of all he sees, even articles which are clearly “genuine.”

And the strange thing was that, in Kyoto, even the real, the sound, the thoroughly *pukka* had an air of flimsiness and falsity. Looking at the most expensive kimonos with a lifetime of wear woven into their thick silk, you would swear they were things of wood-pulp. The ivories resemble celluloid; the hand embroideries have the appearance of the machine-made article. The genuine antiques (...) look as though they had been fabricated yesterday. (JP 244-245)

Huxley explains this air of “flimsiness and falsity” by recourse to the theory that it is a partly a psychological effect resulting from the modern mass production of Japanese cultural icons, which means that we can no longer cannot distinguish the “true” from the “counterfeit”, the genuine work of craftsmanship from its mass-produced copy. That is to say,

(...) in recent years we have become so familiar with the conventional forms of Japanese art turned out on machines by the million for the penny bazaar market that we cannot associate them with anything but cheapness and falsity. (JP 245)

After this claim that objects of Japanese art are somehow suspect, because of their association with the “penny market bazaar”, Huxley then continues with an even more contentious argument which shows his own preference, like Eliot, for art which is ordered and classical, rather than gaudy or, to use his favourite term, Gothic. Thus the flimsiness of Japanese art, Huxley continues, is also ascribable to an “intrinsic feebleness and vulgarity” in the forms themselves. And he contrasts the “baroque” and garish” forms of Japanese art with the “magistral” quality and excellent taste of Chinese. (JP 245)

It goes without saying that Huxley is on very shaky ground here, and he does seem to be guilty of over-generalisation on the basis of a brief visit to a touristic city, ignoring traditionally restrained and esoteric Japanese art forms such as Noh and the Tea Ceremony. But be that as it may. To be fair to Huxley, he now goes on to qualify the hitherto negative picture that he has presented by suggesting that all countries may be said to have a ‘real’ self - a kind of high culture or tradition - which exists alongside an ‘unreal’ self - presumably that of everyday life and vulgar modernity - and which implicitly students of that country or culture should try to discover.

Huxley says that what he has so far described has been nothing more than the ‘unreal’ side of Japan, and he undertakes to give examples of what he regards as its antithesis: Japan’s real self. Two things particularly attracted his admiration. One of these were the geisha, and orchestra members, whom he observed performing in the Cherry Dance in Kyoto. This annual festival - which is also called the *Miyako Odori*<sup>8</sup> - was then, as now, something of a tourist attraction, and Huxley cannot resist prefacing his praise with a criticism of the costumes as “vulgar and garish” and the scenery as “deplorable”. Better versions of “Old Japan”, he quips, can regularly be seen on the stage in London and New York. However, what Huxley does admire, and what he feels is authentic and impossible to replicate, is the dancing, which he describes as “enchanted.” Specifically he admires the formal gestures of graceful courtesy and militaristic precision of the dancers. (JP 245)

A chorus of thirty or forty geishas, drilled to a pitch of almost Prussian efficiency, their farded faces impassive as white masks, performed a ballet that the formalisation of the gestures of courtesy, that was polite conversation made more gracefully polite, that was the apotheosis of good manners at the tea-table. (JP 246)

Huxley was not overly impressed by the music itself, which he regards as somewhat simplistic, and reminiscent of an early form of Russian folk music, but he is once again impressed by the graceful movement of the female orchestra which was, he says, “a ravishment to behold!”.

They were as well drilled as the ballerinas. The twenty guitar players sat in identically the same position, and when they combed the strings of their instruments their hands performed the same movements simultaneously, as though they were the synchronously moving parts of one machine. Similar machines actuated the eight hour-glass-shaped tambourines, the eight small kettle drums, the two sets of cymbals, the two little gongs. Most exquisite of all were the drummers. They knelt in front of their instruments as though before a row of little gods. Each held a pair of enormous white drumsticks, so thick that the tiny hands could hardly grasp them. With these, in unison, they tapped the little gods before whom they knelt; and the little drum gods answered them, boom, boom - a response, it must be admitted, rather more clear and comprehensible than that which deities are accustomed to vouchsafe to their worshippers. But then the ritual of these Japanese adorers was so beautiful that it could hardly fail to be magically compelling. (JP 246-247)

As we can see, it is not only the delicate femininity, the ritualised courtesy, and drilled precision of the drummer girls which attract Huxley, he also sees in their actions something akin to the performance of a religious rite. The drummer girls kneel adoringly (as if in prayer) before “a row of little gods” (the drums) and perform a ritual tapping of the drums which the “deities” answer by “booming”. For Huxley, this performance, which he saw as an ancient quasi-religious form of art - was “magically compelling”, and vitally alive, and as such contrasts sharply with the stultified deadening culture - the muddy mining-camp cities full of Woolworth bazaars - that he has previously described.

The second aspect of Japan that captured Huxley admiration was the unspoilt landscape, with Mount Fuji at its centre, that he passed through on the train to Yokohama. Fittingly, the sun had come out and Huxley begins by describing the beauty of a landscape which, in contrast to the area around Osaka, is unadulterated by industry. In Huxley’s eyes it is seen as something akin to a vast renaissance-style garden.

It was an almost Italian country of abrupt hills and lakes and mountain-encircled plains. A paler variety of our mustard was blooming in the fields. Great expanses of primrose yellow covered the plains to the edge of the blue lakes, to the feet of the dim blue mountains. (JP 248)

The order and beauty of this arcadian landscape is enhanced by a sense of mystery. Huxley senses the native landscape has a pagan vitality, and is pervaded by symbolism. The silhouettes of the native pine trees against the sky suggest to him the shapes of Chinese ideographs, and he ponders what they could mean. For those who could read “the Celestial Symbols”, he says, the countryside might be like “an open book” which would reveal “wisdom and poetry”; on the other hand, he adds, quickly re-assuming the sardonic pose, the trees might just be repeating the phrase “Foreign Devil”- i.e. telling him to go away. He

does not know, but he suspects that the latter is “the more probable hypothesis.” (JP 248) He remains detached.

The countryside is overseen by an even more mysterious presence - Mount Fuji - which Huxley refers to as a “pale ghost” above the landscape and “the sacred mountain of Japan. Huxley describes the mountain in reverential terms: it is, he says, a “miracle of regular and geometrical form” which rises majestically from the plain, lending order to the whole landscape.

[It] stood shining high above us, a huge white cone, girdled with clouds, a miracle of regular and geometrical form among the chaotic hills which it overtopped, the sacred mountain of Japan, Fujiyama. We saw it first at noon, a tiny cloud melting into the clouds; and at sunset we were looking back on it; an enormous mass rising clear of all vapours, naked and perfect, into the coloured sky. (JP 249)

However, this mysterious order - the “naked and perfect” form of Mt Fuji - is soon replaced in Huxley's account by the chaos and dreariness of modern Yokohama where, he says, they were “plunged again, head over ears, into the unreal.” Huxley finds “unreal” Yokohama even more dreary and depressing than “unreal” Kyoto, but he is at pains to point out that the shabbiness, chaos and vulgarity that he describes are not primarily a result of the destruction wrought by the recent earthquake. They are rather, he says, a product of Japan's modernisation and of the same vulgar materialism which, once the destruction of the earthquake is repaired, will reassert itself in Yokohama just as it has in Kyoto.

[In] a little while, when the mess is all cleared up and the damage repaired, it will be just like Kyoto - miles of dreary ill-kept roads, hundreds of thousands of ugly little wooden shanties, and every shanty a shop and every shop a Woolworth. (JP 249)

And so with a sigh, more of relief than regret, Huxley and his wife thankfully board the ship for the USA. His final, pessimistic verdict was that the “real” Japan (of geisha and Mt Fuji) had been “delightful”, but that it had been far outweighed by the “unreal” Japan (of muddy mining camps and penny-bazaars) which was, he says, “obviously so much the more significant and important that it had eclipsed the real.” (JP 249)

### **3. Closing remarks**

In closing, there are two points which deserve our attention. The first is that the broadly pessimistic tone of Huxley's portrait of Japan - described by Storry as “dyspeptic” and “sour,” may be seen as sustained by a general critique of culture according to which there is a conflict between heritage and the mass culture of contemporary society (339). Within Huxley's account, this is the conflict between a country's real and unreal selves. And, as he makes clear, this conflict is not restricted to Japan, but can be applied to any

country, including Britain where his main readership lies. In England, Huxley says, the Cornish countryside, established “County” families, and the Anglican church could be considered as representing the country’s real self<sup>9</sup> (i.e. a high culture which is the enduring heritage of that country), just as in the case of Japan it could be said to consist of Mt Fuji, traditional dances, and “cultured men of leisure.” However, as Huxley sees it, the problem in both countries is that it is the forces of the unreal (the unassimilated, modern) self, as represented by Big Business and Organised Labour, which are driving policy and which will in fact determine the countries’ futures. As he says of Japan,

[It] is the unreal Japan, the wholesale producer of shoddy, which is at present projecting itself on history. Not the dancers, not the cultured and religious gentlemen, but the manufacturers of shoddy direct the country’s policy. And in the enormous mining-camp cities more and more of the Japanese are being transformed, for good or for evil, from peasants and craftsmen into proletarian factory hands, the brothers of all the other proletarian workers of the world. The future of Japan, as of every other country, depends on its ‘unreal’ self. (JP 250)

The challenge, as Huxley sees it, is for the “gradual transformation” of the unreal (i.e. the ugly materialism of the modern world) into something which is “sufficiently noble and decent” to justify inclusion in the enduring heritage of a country. But he is pessimistic, or at least ambivalent, as to whether this can in fact be achieved in the face of the soulless homogenised mass culture, as personified by the “cheap and tawdry” goods of Woolworth bazaars, that he sees sweeping the modern world. Japan, the home of esoteric art forms and sacred mountains, is emblematic of this pernicious historical trend. This, as he saw it, was one lesson for the home reader.

A criticism of the above point however, is that Huxley’s view Japan and England, and indeed the other countries he visited, may be seen as being sustained by notions of “high culture” and “high art” which are ultimately a product of the author’s narrow and privileged upbringing - including his family heritage, his education at Eton and Oxford, and his association with the Bloomsbury *avant-garde* - and that it was this privileged upbringing which led him to see certain aesthetic values as universal. Thus, although Huxley claims in the final pages of his journal that the journey had made him more sceptical, and freed him from his preconceptions about culture and society - which is the virtue of travel, he says - he nonetheless affirms that there are “intuitive” cultural values, which are by implication universal, and he further affirms, as something learned from his journey, that the “established spiritual values are fundamentally correct and should be maintained.” (JP 289-290) The question is: whose intuitions, and whose “spiritual values” are being affirmed? The suspicion must remain that *Jesting Pilate* is in fact tinged with unconscious colonialism; and that what we have essentially is a member of the British upper-class intelligentsia embarking on a whistle-stop tour of colonies, former colonies, and former colonial allies, and assigning each their place in a cultural hierarchy according to his own “intuitive” values. Chinese art, he declaims, is



esoteric and “universal”, whereas Japanese art is gaudy, popularised, and “not universal.” The importance of cultural discernment and hierarchy, it would seem, was yet another lesson for the home reader.

The second key point to note is that Huxley's account of Japan, rather than focussing on one fixed image, is crucially one of a country undergoing transformation, and hence his portrait is pervaded by doubt and ambiguity. The dichotomy of ‘real’ and ‘unreal’, and the extreme doubt he has regarding the authenticity of all he sees are clear expressions of this. Thus, when he is travelling through the countryside leading to Mount Fuji he is unsure of whether the distinctively shaped trees have a hidden spiritual message for him or not; and when he has seen Mount Fuji, he is led to ask: “Is this the real Japan? I suppose so.” Ultimately, Huxley is not sure. Japan is for him simply a transitional world that he passes through rapidly - a liminal zone between East and West, ancient and modern. And amid the uncertainty, and unreality that he perceives, one detects a note of nihilism and despair for the future. To Huxley, the horror of the violence wrought by the Great Kanto Earthquake in Yokohama is ultimately of less significance than the destruction of culture wrought by industrialisation and modernity. And to this may be added a sense of political foreboding. The “enormous mining-camp cities” are, as he says above, transforming the Japanese “from peasants and craftsmen into proletarian factory hands”, a change which he does not know is for better or for worse - “for good or for evil.” Did he fear some kind of political extremism or revolution? He may indeed have done. These were turbulent political times. The success of the Bolshevik revolution had transformed the political landscape, stimulating direct action from workers, and a response from the right. Huxley himself had witnessed the implementation of fascist rule in Italy (where he lived from 1922); and as he was passing through Japan, the General Strike of 1926 was about to erupt in England.

But at this juncture Huxley lacked political convictions. Indeed, his parting words on leaving Japan reflect not only on the abhorrence of modern-day life, but also on the futility of trying to effect any change. The best thing, he says, is to pretend the present age does not exist. “We have,” says Huxley,

the misfortune to live in a world in which all that is historically significant is so repulsive that we are compelled, if we have any pride in our country or our human species, to (...) deny it reality. (JP 250-251)

## NOTES

1. I consulted Bedford's biography (Volume 1, parts one, two and three) for information regarding Huxley's early life. The two eminent families of intellectuals referred to were the Huxleys and the Arnolds. The evolutionary biologist T. H. Huxley (a strong proponent of the Darwinian theory of evolution) was his grandfather, and Matthew Arnold, the poet and cultural critic, his great-uncle. Both in their own way did much to undermine the Victorian faith in progress.

2. This association was, at the least in the first instance, with the intellectuals, artists and writers who gathered under the auspices of Lady Ottoline Morrell, and her husband, at Garsington Manor. These included T. S. Eliot. Lytton Strachey, Bertrand Russell, D. H. Lawrence, Dora Carrington, Mark Gertler, Katherine Mansfield, Maynard Keynes, and others who were to exert a formative influence on art, culture and philosophy in the interwar years. Huxley was a regular visitor to Garsington from 1915 onwards. Exempt from war service due to his poor eyesight (an eye infection had rendered him effectively blind for 18 months in his teens), Huxley worked on the attached farm, as did conscientious objectors like Strachey in order to avoid a prison sentence. Huxley also met his first wife, Maria Nys, at Garsington.

3. To expand on the interaction, and indeed mutual admiration, between Huxley and Eliot. Poller notes the similarity in theme and topos between *The Wasteland* (1922) and *Antic Hay* (1923), and Tigges similarly argues that Eliot drew on Huxley's first novel *Crome Yellow* (1921) as source for his epic poem. Thus the mock fortune-teller "Sesostris, the Sorceress of Ecbatana." in Huxley's novel becomes "Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyante" in Eliot's *The Wasteland*. Poller also notes that both novel and original version of the poem contained a character based on aristocratic poet and activist Nancy Cunard (Myra Viveash and Fresca respectively), Cunard had affairs with Huxley, Pound, and possibly Eliot. Pound persuaded Eliot to cut the 90-line Fresca passage from the poem.

As regards Huxley and Lawrence, Cushman is one of many critics who notes that Lawrence was the model for the leading protagonist in *Point-Counter Point* (1928), a testament to Lawrence's strong influence on Huxley in the twenties.

4. I acknowledge that Hoffman makes the point that Huxley was a great chronicler of the intellectual spirit of his age (17).

5. The letter to his father, which was a response to his father's expression of distaste for his latest novel, *Antic Hay*, speaks of the gulf in values between his own and earlier generations, and affirms his desire to speak for his own generation – the "war generation" – and reflect the current crisis in values.

I am sorry that you should have found my book so distasteful. Like you, I have no desire to enter into argument about it; argument, indeed, would be useless as we start from entirely different premises. I will only point out that it is a book written by a member of what I may call the war-generation for others of his kind; and that it is intended to reflect - fantastically of course but none the less faithfully - the life and opinions of an age which has seen the violent disruption of almost all the standards, conventions and values current in the previous epoch.

Letter to Leonard Huxley, 26 November 1923 (Quoted in Smith 224)

6. The dates and itinerary of Huxley's journey are taken from Bedford chapters 8, 9 and 10.

7. Woolworth (originally an American store) founded branches in England from 1909, rapidly expanding during the 1920s. In Huxley's final novel *Island*, the main character has a drug-induced beatific vision followed by a hellish vision, the latter being described as "an infinitely sinister bargain basement ... a cosmic Woolworth stocked with mass-produced horrors" (272).

8. The *Miyako Odori* is a traditional dance and music festival held annually in Kyoto in April. More information about this event can be found online at:

[http://www.miyako-odori.jp/odori\\_en.html](http://www.miyako-odori.jp/odori_en.html)

9. It goes without saying that many people would find Huxley's suggestion that County families" (i.e. the aristocracy and gentry) together with the Cornish countryside and Church of England might be said to represent England's "real self" as one which is highly contentious, and indicative of the author's upper-class background.

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